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LETTER DATED 15 JULY 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith a copy of a letter from the President of Georgia concerning recent events in Abkhazia, Georgia (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

(Original: English)

Letter dated 11 July 1998 from the President of Georgia addressed to the President of the Security Council

On behalf of the Government of Georgia and the Georgian people, I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the support and assistance provided by the United Nations in the settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia. In the light of the recent tragic developments in the Gali district, I feel compelled to draw your attention to the current disturbing situation in Abkhazia.

At the end of May 1998, separatist Abkhaz forces carried out military actions against the civilian Georgian population in the Gali district. These actions resulted in the injury and death of dozens of people. The Abkhaz separatists forced thirty-five thousand people to flee their homes and destroyed their houses. Regrettably, the infringement of the fundamental rights of the Georgian population continues to this day.

These events occurred at a time when, through concerted effort, the Geneva process gained momentum, the activities of the coordinating bodies became more effective, the programme of economic rehabilitation of the Abkhaz region took shape, the foundation was laid for raising the level of bilateral talks and preconditions were specified for attaining political accord. As part of this accord, the Georgian Government has set forth concrete and constructive proposals regarding the nature of the relationship between the autonomy and the centre.

The latest occurrence of the policy of ethnic cleansing conducted by the separatists was intended to reverse these positive developments. This policy manifested itself in mass killings, rape and the plunder of the Georgian population. The separatists were greatly assisted in their criminal activities by foreign armed bands.

There can be no doubt that the illegal activities of the Abkhaz separatists were directed at the undermining of the recent negotiations, including the Geneva process. The acts perpetrated by the Abkhaz separatists blatantly violate the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council, the final documents of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Budapest and Lisbon summits and the accords signed by the parties to the conflict.

The Government of Georgia made every effort to avert the eruption of a wide-scale military conflict in Georgia. The decision of the Georgian Government not to use armed force to stop the hostilities launched by the Abkhaz separatists brought to a minimum the possible tragic consequences of their actions.

The events in the Gali district must be qualified as a continuation of ethnic cleansing/genocide of the Georgian population. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Budapest and Lisbon summits have already assessed the acts committed in Abkhazia as such. There is every reason to state that the situation in Abkhazia, including the Gali district, poses a threat, not only to Georgia, but to the entire international community. This necessitates the need to augment the role of the United Nations in the peace process and to determine effective methods of conflict resolution.

In order to expedite the peace process and settle the conflict, the Government of Georgia considers the following to be pressing tasks:

- Increasing the composition and personnel of the UN observer personnel;
- Development and implementation of an effective mechanism for the unconditional and safe return of displaced persons and guarantees for the rehabilitation of their property;
- Expansion of the activities of the United Nations (UNOMIG) observation mission and action to ensure their safety;
- Drawing up of an agreement providing for the parties' responsibility for the security of the population of Abkhazia, the peacekeepers and international personnel, as well as for the prevention of armed confrontation and for determining the measures and guarantees of the activities of the peacekeeping forces.

In order to achieve a lasting settlement of the conflict, it is highly important that, within the framework of the Geneva negotiations and considering the proposals of the parties concerned, the United Nations elaborate a draft of the political accord and submit it to the parties for consideration.

The role of Russia in the process of settlement remains important, as well as the utilization of the potential of the Commonwealth of Independent States peacekeeping forces, in proper coordination.

I do hope that the United Nations General Assembly, the Office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy and the members of the Security Council will display the political will to lead the peace process out of the deadlock.

We hope that the international community will properly assess the situation in the Gali region and the actions of the Abkhaz separatist forces which have claimed the lives of a great number of people.

In the light of the above, we appeal to you to support the adoption of a Security Council resolution qualifying the activities of Abkhaz separatists against the Georgian population as ethnic cleansing and genocide.

I am confident that this resolution will appropriately address the reality of the current situation and that all measures will be taken to avoid further tragic developments.

(Signed) Eduard SHEVARDNADZE